

Message Text

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PAGE 01 AMMAN 03860 030817Z

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ACTION SS-30

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P 030754Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1820

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

S E C R E T AMMAN 3860

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, JO, IS

SUBJECT: BRIDGE PROBLEMS

1. PRIME MINISTER RIFAI IS SEEKING US HELP WITH THE ISRAELIS TO ATTEMPT TO ALLEVIATE SOME OF THE HARDSHIPS NOW BEING SUFFERED BY JORDAN IN CONNECTION WITH SLOW RATE OF TRANSIT OF ARABS TO WEST BANK.

2. RIFAI POINTS OUT THAT UP UNTIL RECENTLY (EXACT DATE NOT SPECIFIED) ISRAELIS PROCESSED ABOUT 2,500 ARAB TRAVELERS INWARD TO WEST BANK THROUGH HUSSEIN/ALLENBY BRIDGE AND DAMYAI BRIDGE. RECENTLY RATE OF TRANSFER HAS SLOWED TO ABOUT 800 PER DAY. THIS COMES AT A TIME WHEN JORDAN IS BECOMING INCREASINLY CROWDED WITH SUMMER TRAVELERS WHO WISH TO RETURN TO WEST BANK. THE JORDANIAN PASSPORT CONTROL POINT WHICH IS LOCATED ONLY A FEW KILOMETERS TO THE EAST OF THE BRIDGE IN THE JORDAN VALLEY IS NOW BACKLOGGED WITH PERHAPS AS MANY AS 10,000 CROSSERS. WITHIN LAST FEW DAYS THEY HAVE HAD ONE FATALITY FROM CROWD TRYING TO PUSH ON BUSES AND OTHER SERIOUS INJURIES. BULK OF TRANSIT PASSENGERS MUST REMAIN IN THE OPEN FIELDS FOR PERHAPS AS LONG AS FIVE DAYS' WAIT IN ORDER TO CROSS. TEMPERATURES IN THE AREA NOW WELL ABOVE ONE HUNDRED DEGREES FAHRENHEIT. JORDAN HAS INCREASED SECURITY FORCES TO CONTROL PROBLEMS WHICH CAUSED FATALITY

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 AMMAN 03860 030817Z

BUT HAVE ASKED US TO HELP IN FINDING SOLUTION TO MORE

SPEEDY MOVEMENT OF BRIDGE CROSSERS.

3. SUGGESTION IS THAT ISRAELIS CAN BE PERSUADED TO INCREASE NUMBERS OF TROOPS AND SECURITY FORCES PROCESSING CORSSERS AND KEEP CORSSING POINTS OPEN FOR LONGER HOURS DURING EACH DAY SO THAT A DAILY FLOW OF 2,500 CAN CROSS.

4. FYI: RIFAI RESISTED TEMPTATION TO PASS ON TO ISRAELIS VOCIFEROUS COMPLAINTS WHICH HE HAS RECIEVED ABOUT INDIGNITIES SUFFERED BY ARABS CROSSING INTO WEST BANK WITH EXTREMELY THOROUGH BODY SEARCHES CONDUCTED BY ISRAELIS. HE HAS ALOS RECIVED EXTENSIVE COMPLAINTS ABOUT ENFORCED AND UNNECESSARY DELAYS. HE RECOGNIZES THESE IN THE MAIN STEM FROM RECENT SEVERE ISRAELI REACTIONS TO TERRORIST OPERATIONS AND THE INCREASED SECURITY MEASURES WHICH SUCH HAS INDUCED ISRAELIS TO INSTITUTE ON WEST BANK. END FYI.

5. HE HOPES THAT EMBASSY TEL AVIV AT AN APPROPRIATELY HIGH LEVEL CAN CONVEY HIS CONCERN AND SINCERE REQUEST FOR HELP IN THIS MATTER. HE WANTS TO ASSURE ISRAELIS THAT JORDANIANS ALSO HAVE CONDUCTED THOROUGH SEARCHES OF BRIDGE CROSSERS AT TIME THEIR INITIAL ENTRY INTO JORDAN AND THROUGH SERIOUS PROSECUTION OF MEASURES OF INTERNAL SECURITY. FYI: HE TOLD ME THAT TODAY HE SIGNED A TEN-YEAR SENTENCE FOR A MAN RECENTLY APPREHENDED ON OUTSKIRTS OF AMMAN WITH EXPLOSIVES AND ARMS DESTINED FOR WEST BANK. END FYI.

6. I TOLD RIFAI THAT I WOULD APSS ON HIS REQUEST IMMEDIATELY AND WOULD SEEK WASHINGTON APPROVAL FOR EMBASSY TEL AVIV TO MAKE AN APPROACH ALONG LINES HE SUGGESTS.

7. AS IN CASE OF SIMILAR EARLIER REQUEST RELATED TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS AND PROMOTION OF GREATER TACIT ISRAELI-JORDANIAN TRUST AND COOPERATION WOULD BE GREATLY FACILITATED IF WE COULD PASS THIS MESSAGE AND SEEK ISRAELI ASSISTANCE IN
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PAGE 03 AMMAN 03860 030817Z

ALLEVIATING PROBLEM. AT NO TIME DID RIFAI ASSERT THAT ISRAELIS SHOULD CHANGE SECURITY PROCEDURES OR OTHERWISE LOWER THE BARRIERS ALTHOUGH SUCH WOULD BE WELCOME. ALL HE IS ASKING FOR IS A GREATER EFFORT TO PERMIT HIGHER NUMBER OF DAILY CROSSINGS TO TAKE PLACE. WE WOULD OF COURSE WELCOME EMBASSY TEL AVIV'S REACTION AND COMMENTS.
PICKERING

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NNN

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